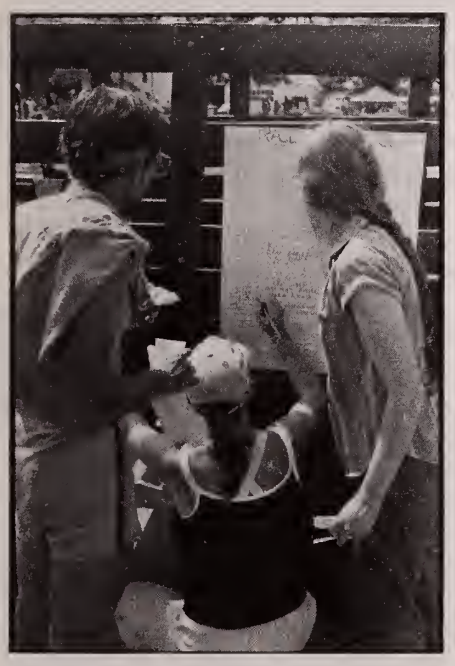
WENDELL POST

Special Edition 75¢

The Bicentennial Vignettes & Wendell Old Home Day 1982 Photos



There's nothing like Old Home Day sociability!

Introduction

by Broadus Mitchell

Most towns do not mention modesty among their merits. There is no disputing the fact that Wendell lacks distinctions that belong to many of our neighbors. To begin with, although this past year Wendell turned two hundred years old, other towns are older. There is Salem, the saints' noses pointed skyward as much as to say, "There dwells God, our fellow townsman." Cambridge is not unconscious of its superiority in poets and professors. Old Deerfield, frontier of wealth and woe; Montague, possessed of a church reputedly designed by the tasteful Asher Benjamin; then those college towns, Amherst, South Hadley, Northampton, Middletown, Williamstown and more. Every June they are loyally visited by substantial gents and dames who once--would you believe it?--were palpitating freshmen in those halls of learning. Springfield's ancient arsenal withstood the assault of Daniel Shay's angry farmers. At Turner's Falls the Indians did not fare so well at the hands of white settlers.

Wendell has never been exclusive. The original church was Congregational without question, but when the Baptists were not welcome in Shutesbury, they were happily received here. And Methodists and Mormons equally. Wendell slaughtered nobody, not witches nor redmen nor Shaysites. We have no buildings that proclaim themselves; there is not a column in the place, nor do school and church, town hall and library appear less serviceable with their plain entrances.

The town fathers chose a notable hilltop that may be called unique. The Wendell green, affectionately tended, overlooks the countryside, for the landscape falls away to north, east, south and if not to the west, it ought to do so for the sake of symmetry. Wendell is airy. Not in the sense of putting airs, but in the sense that it is free-breathing, independent, unobtrusively content with itself, not envious of others.

If you so insist that a town so blessed must have startling episodes in its past, the sketches that follow will give you hints into our town's collective character and history, as well as into some of the individuals who helped forge that history. The Indians retreated, leaving the deer to less worthy hunters. Wendell did its share in the closing days of the Revolution, and alas, supplied prisoners for Andersonville in the Civil War. Wendell also had a vicarious part in the successful investment secrets of Hetty Green. All in all, Wendell has had citizens to inspire admiration for lifelong industry, integrity and good will. The following vignettes, written by members of the Wendell Bicentennial Committee, depict some of those citizens.

THE WENDELL
BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Emma Cappelluzzo
Jean Forward
Broadus Mitchell
Louise Mitchell
Claire Stewart
Don Stewart
Jean Weber

OLD HOME DAY

'ON THE COMMON'

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The Slow Bike Race, organized by Klondike Koehler, was a real challange of balance and skill as bikers teetered to stay upright. Last one over the finish line was the winner!

The Starting Shot of the First Annual Old Home Day Five Mile Dash kicked off this year's Old Home Day festivities. As the large field of runners passed out of sight, the parade began; children, balloons, bikes, clowns, ponies, led by the squealing fire truck. Afterwards, Henry Brown the Clown Reknown juggled fire and performed other antics for the crowd's delight.

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SPECIAL EDITION STAFF
Layout: Ann Diemand, Kathy Becker
Typist: Donna Huntington
Photographer: Don Pugh

Note: Reprints of all photos are available for $5.00. Contact Don Pugh.

Bicentennial Vignettes

Although the following vignette is based upon a fictional character, the situation that it portrays was a very real one for those Native Americans who lived in New England during the colonial settlement. With the influx of settlers to the area, many Native Americans were displaced geographically. Because there were so many people coming to the area, living here and hunting game for their tables, very often the Native Americans were forced to go elsewhere--to other areas of the Valley in order that they might survive. This, of course, was just one of the problems that these people faced in the early days of America's colonization. But it is primarily this situation which is reflected in the story of Kiiskwamo.

Kiiskwamo

a native american indian

by Emma Cappelluzzo

Setting: It is early morning, and one hears the chirping of birds and the sound of a river. Kiiskwamo is seated on a large stump. He is bare-chested and dressed in leggings. He has no weapons (no hatchet, no bow and arrow or knife. He is dark haired and muscular. He is musing to himself before he meets with the tribal elders. He is worried about his desire to leave the area to find new hunting grounds before winter sets in. He is afraid to leave his family who will be unprotected without him if he goes west into the land of the flats along the Connecticut River. He is concerned about the Mohawk raids that have increased and the palefaces from the east who are moving rapidly into his hunting grounds. And he is also worried that he will bring shame and dishonor upon his family if he does. Yet, he feels that he must go further west to see if the wildlife and water are as good as they once were here. To leave his family is not new for Kiiskwamo. He has often gone on hunting expeditions while they waited home for him and has always returned to find them safe. But now he is afraid to leave them, and now the hunting is poor in the forest.

KIISKWAMO (stirring at the leaves with a stick) If I know my elders, they will say, 'Go brave hunter. Go and see the wild berries, find the grouse and deer, and come back to us with news of who treads the forests.' But if I go, I do not wish to return...Is it because I am a coward? (pause) No! I cannot be a coward! My mother's word made me a hunter and a provider for my family. And I have never feared anything. But now I want to leave this land. I know we must all leave, that we must all go. The elders will not see this as I do. They will see me as shameful for wanting to go away. (pause) The elders are wise. All my life I have listened to them. And yet now... now I must tell them about my fears, and they will answer that I am foolish and a coward. But I know I can outrun the fleetest--that my honor since I was a boy is hunting the great swift deer! No, the fear I have is in my heart...when I think of how we are losing our hunting grounds to others...to those from the east who also hunt men and women ...What do the elders know of the time when I last went down to the clear river by the eastern plain. It was dawn, and I sat on the flat rock and prayed to the Spirit of the Great. The land was yellow-red as the new sun quickly climbed and spread over the waters. From where I sat I could hear the white waters straining at the large trunks of trees, and my hope for thirsty deer grew as I peered across the flats. It was then that I saw the men with heavy robes. It seemed as if they were wrapped in bear robes. They were standing close to the bend, smoke curling 'round their heads, and they could not see me. I heard them speak, but I could not understand their words. Suddenly there was a noise of thunder and then a yell, and across the river a big, many-horned deer fell down on his knees in the shallows, his head twisted as if by a strong arm...The thunder echoed and the men's voices called loudly. Then, not far from the deer, three more men ran down from the slopes that met the water's edge. They, too, were heavily clad and they had long sticks. I saw the deer down on his side, its legs thrashing... A man lifted his stick and there was another thunder noise, as big as if the Great Spirit were roaring! The echoes rose around me...and then all was quiet ...even the deer. I froze to the flat rock and breath came steadily rushing steadily through my nose, my heart thumping inside of me. I had never seen these hunters before. Who were they? And what was the thunder they wrestled the deer with?--my deer, at my water's edge? I dared not let the men see me. I remembered the elders speaking of the white men who had said they came in peace from another valley...And yet...I was afraid of them. I watched the five men tie the deer on a long pole and carry it between them. They marched up the flats to the east, along the clear river. I stayed quiet for a long time, my eyes steady on the backs of the men as they went along, probably back to their camp in the valley beyond. Then I slid down from the flat rock, washed my face, and turned to climb the long hill back to our village. That was the first time I saw the men. Since then there have been many mornings when I have not hunted by the clear water and returned with only squirrel or muskrat instead of a hind of deer meat. I have seen the men camping on the flats and near the rock I prayed on. I knew from my brother Asinkaw that his wife and brother's brother were gone--vanished. We do not know why. Our brothers, the Mohawks, sent a messenger to us one day. I saw the brave Mohawks, and I knew they were not afraid. But they are strong and have so many hunting grounds. I am afraid for our village--the Mohawk on one side of us and the white faces on our eastern side. I have not fished on that side of the river nor have I taken deer. I go now to the base of the mountain and over the west side of the river. I have heard it said that the great bear lives in caves there, but I have not seen one yet. I believe the bear have been taken by the Mohawks before we came here. My elders take deer from the swamps near the river, and they say that someday I will be privileged to hunt the sacred bear with them. But for now I must hunt deer--deer which the white men want also. (pause) The braves sometimes say we will have no sticks to barter with the Mohawks when they come, and then the white faces will thunder at us and we will all die. Still, the elders stay and now winter is coming...We have no extra meat to dry and the berries will not last. I know we must leave here or perish...(Kiiskwamo stands now and looks out at the sky. He speaks with intensity to the Great Spirit) Oh, Father who knows all...help me help my village ...They must leave with me or perish... or I must go along to find new hunting grounds. Will I bring shame upon myself and my family if I go?...A curse on me if I do!...I do not wish to leave my family, for they are happy here and see the scarcity of food as only a passing thing. They pretend not to notice my poor hunting and praise me still, but other young hunters are also finding no food. We are crowded in the forest now...No longer do the still hours accompany me when I leave to hunt...We are too many for this small hilltop, and the close valleys are filling with others as once they were filled with game...We must leave here...Oh, Great Spirit, help me now! What shall I say to convince the elders? They will see me as weak and with no courage. How can they know that treachery by our neighbors is clouding over and will fall upon us? Oh, Great Father, give me the wisdom to explain myself as a good and brave hnuter. Give me the Mohegan way within my soul as I meet with the great elders. Help me make my speech to them with calm strength and dignity so they will hear me through you and you will speak from my heart to them...(Kiiskwamo sits down again, stirring the leaves.)

After a few moments he quietly begins to chant his own Mohegan prayer:

From where the wind blows now and forever,
From where the trees reach tall,
Let the Mother of us all speed the sun so we will be warm and comforted.
From oaken leaves let the small fire rise into the early morning blaze of sun.
From where we sit in our circle singing of your praises,
Let the winds blow gently and the tall trees reach you.
Oh, Great Earth Mother and Winter Moon,
Let the fishes leap again for my people.
Let the great bear come again in our valleys.
Let the pronged deer proudly meet me on our paths and let the hunters know good singing and praise once more.
Let the early spring bring hawks to circle and leave feathers for our dance.
Oh, great earth Mother, spirit of the icey waters and blue flame,
help me to find the Mohegan path again.
Let the eagle speak peace with spirits of the frog and yellow-winged birds.
For this is sacred land, a good land, and a bountiful land.
Why can it not be so forever?
Why can it not be so forever?
Help me be a good Mohegan.
Cut the fears from my heart, Oh great Mother.
Help me to persuade the elders they are needed in another place,
that even wise men are sometimes beguiled by treachery as they are beguiled now...
Help me reach the other side, and
let me find the wind that ever blows,
and trees that are green and black and reach tall.
Oh, Great Mother of the earth,
help me be strong,
a good hunter and protector of my people.

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Silas Wilder

by Jean Forward

(Settled in Wendell in 1755, helped organise the Congregational Church)

Setting: Silas stands in front of a speaker's podium. He is dressed in a loose shirt, made of coarse cloth (cotton or wool,) covered by a vest of darker material. His pants are either coarse cloth or leather, loose-legged and dark like the vest. He wears leather boots up to the calf and a three-cornered hat with a small pheasant feather.

Silas: My name be Silas Wilder, and I cameth here in 1755 with the Lord's blessing to settle in this hilly place. Many were the reasons for my departure to Wendell, the most urgent of which were to escape the Rebel Rousers of the eastern shore. Boston and its neighbors hath been overgrown with folk of questionable repute, and I have taken my leave to find a God-fearing, God-loving community. Others came hither from the east too--removed from Lancaster, Sterling, Westminister, Leominister and Lexington. Settlements hath grown up in the north, upon that portion of the town then calleth Ervingshire. I were settled with my kin near Wickett Pond, and my neighbors been Lemuel Beamen, Benjamin Glazier, John Wetherbee, Master Locke and others. Wendell were a land temperate for heat and cold, abounding in forested hills and providing wood aplenty for them that settled here. It were clean of air too, and were blessed with game for hunting--deer and fowl and 'coons and bear--and the streams hath been filled to bursting. We hath no need to fight the savage heathen when I were here, but we hath need to clear the fields for planting and farming. There hath been mostly farmers among us, and we hath driven the oxen and planted the crops. Grain, flax, cattle, sheep and swine hath been plentiful in the early days, and the port' and grain barrels hath been taken to Boston in the winter. There hath been physicians too, and a blacksmith, and one time--when I were already gone to my eternal rest--the town hath even been blessed with 14 sawmills with machinery for turning! There were also the Ballare Tavern, on what now be called Jennison Road, where coaches would stop and horses were watered and people fed. In 1756, the town's first road were opened and came from Shutesbury, what were then called Roadtown. That same year another road been cut through from Montague. When the King's men landeth in the Bay Colony to put down the rebels, my son Nathaniel hath joined Captain Sweetser and other Wendell boys, and the townfolk hath raised hard money to procure beef for the army and wages for the soldiers. (as an aside, boasting) my Nathaniel, buried in 1851, hath lived to be the town's oldest inhabitant and were 100 years and 2 days when the Good Lord hath chosen to close his eyes! (pause) We that were here in 1774 hath organized the Congregational church, but it weren't till 1781, the same year that the town hath been incorporated, that our meetin' house hath begun. It were finished in 1783, but it hath taken almost ten years more to finish our temple to the Lord with a floor, stove and pews. I were here when all the labor hath been done, and I hath heard the most Reverent Mr. Killburn speak and hath known that the Lord were pleased with His obedient children. My children hath prayed in the meeting house too, and their children after them hath prayed in yonder church after it were newly raised in 1846. (Pause) There hath been others who hath built their own houses of worship to the Lord, and I hath seen them from beyond the clouds where I hath been at rest these many a year. The early Baptists did rebel against their minister in neighboring Shutesbury and would not suffer to be blasphemed for their democratic views. Their house for the Lord were built here in 1819--it be this very house you sit in now wherein you watch and listen. Later there hath also been a Methodist Church Society, and a society of Universalists. And after that church quarrels betwixt the Congregationalists and the Unitarians, many of the towns' folk hath converted to the Mormon ways. Most of these hath been poor people that hath earned their living weaving baskets and picking berries. They ten went forth in covered wagons, leaving Wendell for the far west. But there still be an old burial ground, hidden back on Mormon Hollow Drive, where many of their kin still return to lay down flowers for the blessed and departed souls. (pause) How changed the times be now! There be no farming anymore in Wendell, save for the few hearty souls that harvest the hay in summer and do plant gardens do feed by in the winter. There be but one real farm now, worked by the Diemand folk for eggs, and there be only the Ballou lumber and but a handful of loggers and forestmen. There do be the Country Store where meals be given and food be bought, and the Gibb's place in the Depot. And there be the post office too where Sister Powling doth take the mail and chat with neighbors. (pause, nostalgically) but there be no farming anymore, and no grain or cattle or port' to drive to market. The one-room schoolhouses be gone too, and the temple we raiseth to our merciful Lord be closed and silent. (pause) Would I could still see that house peopled by the brethren and sisters of the town today! But them that would pray to our Master and would give thanks for His love do go elsewhere to lift their voices and show their hearts. 'Twere the way of the world, to change and grow. And that be not bad... only forgetting be so. (pause) Be not forgetful of what hath been here, for what hath been be what is, and what will be. 'Tis said the child be father of the man; so also yesteryear be nurturance for tomorrow. We here is spirit can but remember, you here is flesh can do! Great goodness be your works, today and forever. Blessed be this town, and all that dwell herein. So sayeth this most humble servant, Silas Wilder!

Refs. Reprinted material included in Wendell Historical Packet. The Wendell Free Library, 1980.
Edward Winslow, 1963, "A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mourt's Relations" ed. by Dwight B. Heath (New York" Corinth Books)
William Bradford, 1898. Plymouth Plantation (Boston: Wright and Pitter Printing Co., State Printers)

Race winner H. Oldham.
Time: 25 min., 17 sec.
The five mile race course included a grueling uphill stretch through Wendell State Forest.

Race organizer Beth Erviti hands award to 1st Woman Div. winner Bette Richard.

Fred Sweitzer as he finishes Five Mile Dash.

At the starting shot, the First Annual Wendell Old Home Day Five Mile Dash was off. Race organizer Beth Erviti steps for safety beside tree.

Hetty Green

by Jean Weber

Setting: Hetty is dressed all in black, with a black veil over her face--the costume she most often wore in life and for which she was famous. The dress is long, tattered and worn. It has a petticoat underneath, and around Hetty's waist, over the petticoat, hang a bunch of keys. Hetty is seated in a rocking chair and holds a cane in front of her. She rocks back and forth most of the time, stopping when she gets excited and wants to emphasize what she says.

HETTY: They called me the Witch of Wall Street, and I guess to many people I was just that: a witch. I certainly didn't think or act like most other folks, but then again, I wasn't like most other folks. At the turn of the century I was the richest woman in the whole world, and when I died in 1916, rumor had it that I had left an estate worth more than $100 million dollars. Funny how people, especially the press ,will exaggerate: my fortune was actually assessed 10 years after my death at a mere sixty-seven million, three-hundred-eighty-five-thousand, four-hundred forty-seven dollars and fifty-nine cents. But I won't quibble over a few dollars now--not at this late date anyways. It's all gone to the wind anyhow--yup, all of it. My aunt Sylvia Ann Howland saw to that when she died and stipulated in her will that after my death all of her remaining estate was to be distributed among each and every living descendant of her grandfather, Gideon Howland. That made 439 heirs--can you believe it! 439 of them 'poor relations.' And now it's all gone! Scattered all over the face of the earth and gone! That son and daughter of mine weren't much smarter either. Ned squandered his money on yachts and fandangled automotive contraptions, and Sylvia --I could really have killed her!--left her money to friends and charities and people she never even knew! 'Caused me to bolt almost upright out of my grave when she did that! Kids! They're so short-sighted and daft sometimes! (pause) Still, it was a might fun getting to be the richest woman in the world and outsmarting everyone who was after my money. No lawyers or doctors ever cheated me out of anything like they did my aunt Sylvia--they poisoned her too, I always knew that!--or got anything more from me but what they deserved. I know most people hated me--they were just jealous of my money, so they called me a witch. Witch nothin'! My father, who made his fortune in the whaling business in New Bedford, taught me the worth of a nickel, and no blamed doctor or lawyer or tax assessor was going to cheat me out of anything!! (pauses, laughs a low kind of cackle, reflecting on her life and escapades) When I think of all the times they landed me in court trying to prove I lived in New York or Chicago or Timbuctu just so they could tax me! (slaps her knee hard and laughs outright) They never did, though!--no, never! I had more flats in Hoboken than they could keep up with, the lot of 'em. I was never in one place long enough for anyone to say I lived there, and the only place I ever had to pay taxes in was Bellows Falls--and at a special rate, too. Damn near well better have been special after that spendthrift husband of mine almost lost all my money in 1885! He went and speculated on some railroad shares and then the bank tried to hold me responsible for his debts! Imagine!! Well, I covered his debts--that's what a rich woman is good for, you know--but that was the first and last time, I'll tell ya! Served Edward Green right too--and the Cisco banking house that went out of business after I took out all my money! (pause) But it was a grand time, I'll tell you. Outfoxing and outwitting everyone. And despite what most people said and wrote about me, I had my friends--people who knew me and understood me. And let me be M-E!! There was Annie Leary of New York--a rich and famous papal countess who introduced me and my daughter Sylvia to all the 'high society' people--the Carnegies, Astors, J.P. Morgan, the Mellons, Vanderbilts and Rockefellers. All those 'upper crust' folk, you know. I never much cared about them one way or the other. They looked down their noses at the way I dressed and the way I lived, talking about me behind my back and making fun of me in the social columns of the newspapers. I never really cared for their kind. They were wasteful and daffy--had no common sense at all. I was always surprised that Annie Leary liked them the way she did. Annie was always throwing parties for them and inviting me, and then later Sylvia. She took great pride in those parties and loved hobnobbing with them 'swells.' I guess, being a Catholic, that was a real accomplishment for Annie--being accepted by that crowd. I didn't have much patience for them myself. Always showing off their diamonds and emeralds. Shute! I had some of those things myself--collateral for loans I made--but they didn't do a thing for me. Just a whole lot of colored stones set on a string to make them look good. Give me a piece of real estate or a railroad share any day! (chuckles) But Annie, she liked them folks and always wanted me over when they came. Once--I don't remember if it was at Annie's or not, it was so long ago --I danced with the Prince of Wales. (added quickly--) --Oh, don't worry: I didn't dress in the black rags that I usually went around in, I had enough sense not to do that! No, no! I dressed in a white Swiss muslin dress that had a pink sash. I even had pink slippers and golden balls of filigree in my ears. (Hetty lifts her hand and gestures to her ear) When I was presented to the Prince--he was the son of Queen Victoria, remember, and later became King Edward VII--I told him I was the Princess of "Wales"-- (spells out) W-h-a-l-e-s, that is. (Hetty laughs to herself, amused) That sure caused his Royal Highness to take some notice of me, I can tell you! (she laughs again, pauses for a moment, and continues rocking in her chair) Yup, I met 'em all when I was a young woman, though I could've lived without 'em too. But Annie Leary always wanted me to come to her functions, so I went. Sometimes. And I will say this about Annie: look down their noses as them others did at me, Annie was always my friend no matter what I looked like or what I did. (pause) So was Bertha Whelpley of Wendell, Massachusetts. More than once was the time we sat out together on the porch of the old Green house in Wendell. My husband Edward had property there. His father had been born in Wendell, and his grandfather--Squire Joshua Green--had been a resident of the town and head selectman for some 40 years. The house was still standing when Edward Green and I married in 1867, and when Ned and Sylvia were little, I'd spend a couple of days in Wendell before going over to Bellows Falls, Vermont. Mrs. Whelpley--she afterwards married a marble quarry owner named Torrey--wasn't a rich woman at all, but she made out all right. And while little Ned and Sylvia ran around on the lawn near the white picket fence, she and I would sit on the porch and gab for hours. 'Hetty,' she once said to me, 'how can you walk around the streets of New York City carrying your fortune in nothing better than an old, worn-out handbag! Aren't you afraid someone will knock you down and steal all your money away from you?' 'Pschaw!' I says to Mrs. Whelpley, 'there's no one any where who can take my fortune away from me! Why just look here!' I says, and I stood straight up (Hetty puts her cane aside and gets up from her rocker to demonstrate). 'Look!' I says to Bertha Whelpley, and before she could say anything, I grabbed my skirt at my knees (Hetty does so now), pulled it h-i-g-h up (she pulls her skirt up in the air) and I showed Mrs. Whelpley my petticoat which had all shapes and sizes of pockets sewed right there on it! (Hetty holds her skirt up high for a moment, shakes it around in the air, and then jangles the set of keys that are fastened around her waist. She laughs hysterically and then sits back in her rocker, taking up her cane again and holding it in front of her. She rocks for a bit, and then quietly resumes.) Yup, we spent many an hour together on that porch, me tellin' Bertha all about New York and she tellin' me all about Wendell and the goins-on at the town meetings. She told me all about Squire Green too, and how he'd done so many good things for Wendell. I didn't much share the Squire's generous spirit or notions on life, but I remember once wanting to do something really fine for someone--(disparagingly)--the Carnegies and Mellons were always doing something fine for someone--and then seeing Bertha and telling her how I wanted to make a present to Wendell--maybe give the town something it would really like and be proud of. We discussed it for days, and I was real excited thinking about it--thinking, for the first time in my whole life, about actually spending some of my money! When I finally decided what the present should be, we went up together to the Selectmen and I made my offer. 'I'll give you,' I said, 'the biggest and best library money can buy. There'll be no library like it in the whole world!' I said. 'Only thing is, you've got to call it the Hetty Green Library, nothing else.' (pause, silence) Ever try telling three New England selectmen what they have to do? (pause again) Well, they had their pride. (she points with her cane in the direction of the Wendell Free Library) There it is, right out there. Stubborn and thick they were. Just like me. But I had to respect them for that--'though they sure ruffled my feathers. (irratatedly) 'Caused me a mighty big tax right-off too. (rocks some more, reflecting) The world hasn't changed much since my time, you know. Not really, anyway. I lived through the Civil War and a few financial panics too. Of course, I always had enough money, even in the worst days. But there were a few others who had some money, and they still jumped out of the windows in 1929. You've had two world wars since I died--Viet Nam too--and a fair share of economic scares and recessions. You also have your 'pet gripes' as you call them nowadays, and the 'witches' that you publicly and privately hate. And the stock market still has the bears and the bulls that push and pull at each other and try to make a 'big kill.' (boasting) 'Course, no one'll ever bull the way I did--heh,heh, heh--if you get my meanin'. (rocking again) Nope, nothin's changed much all these years. Just a bit of the dressin' maybe, none o' the potatoes. (pauses again, rocking with her head bent down in thought. Suddenly she stops rocking, and simultaneously lifts her head and holds her cane firmly in place. Looks straight out at audience. Waits a moment, then stands up, tall and erect) And I betcha--(pause)--I betcha' if I were here, right here (taps floor hard with cane on word 'here") on this spot--and I made my offer again--(lifts cane slowly, and points meaningfully in the direction of the library --voice low and deliberate)--I betcha' they'd say ... (lights go immediately out)

References:

Hetty Green, A Woman Who Loved Money, Boyden Sparkes and Samuel Taylor Moore, 1930 (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co.,Inc.)

The Day They Shook the Plum Tree, Arthur H. Lewis, 1963 (New York: Harcourt Brace & World)

The Springfield Republic, 1931 (article on Hetty Green)

That's Dave Robinson. Yes, it's a saw that he is playing with a bow!

Musicians Tom Devine, Judith Ann Marie and Jeffrey Hoffman.

Wailin' Dave Robinson and Myron Becker play the blues.

Surprise guest David Mallet and his band, Peter and Michael, played to a large audience seated on the common as the sun set over Wendell.

Shades of Magic Music, there's Jeffrey Bauman, Rodney, Judith Ann Marie, Tom Devine, and Jeffrey Hoffman.

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• roadways
• trenching
• snow removal
• Fill-Loam-Gravel
SEPTIC TANKS + LEECH FIELDS INSTALLED

David & Joseph Blair
David's Letter

by Don Stewart

Setting: David Blair, the older brother, sits against a tree with his knees up in front of him. He holds a piece of paper and the stub of a pencil against his knees, and he is dressed in Yankee blues that are dirty and tattered. He is writing a letter to his mother in Wendell, and as he begins to write, he recites aloud. He speaks very slowly, pausing a lot, and we see his hand moving simultaneously across the paper as he does so. At a designated part in the script, his voice will begin to trail off, replaced (almost in unison) by his mother's. The light will go off on David and pick up on Mrs. Blair, who is then seen reading her son's letter. The effect will be that David begins the letter at Andersonville, and his mother continues and finished reading it in Wendell.

DAVID: " 'Dear Mother. I am writing to you by permission of the Sanitary Commission which has recently visited Camp Sumter on the inspection tour. In honor of this occasion we have been allowed an extra ration of cornmeal, an appointment with the doctor, and a Sanitary Commision box containing clothing, medical kit, and some preserves and tinned fruit. My brother Joseph and I have been allowed these gifts as we both signed the Petition to General Grant for Prisoner Exchange. Joseph and I have been here since February with several thousand others who were removed from the prison at Richmond whom the Rebels cannot afford to feed. We are issued one blanket apiece which may serve as shade from the blistering heat by day, and protection from the insects at night. The blankets are pitched as tents along the "deadline," a picket fence inside the stockade which we are made to construct of twenty foot pine timbers cleared from twenty acres in the Georgia hills. A small stream called Sweet-Water Branch divides the camp, and provides the only water which grows more foul by the day as thousands more men join the population.'

MRS. BLAIR: " 'Each man is given one cup of cornmeal in the morning. We cannot cook the cornmeal, as there is so little water, and no firewood, so most of us throw it on the ground. Those of us who have some money or something useful to exchange can barter for a few greens or a potato, and some prisoners keep woodyards or restuarants. Most of us spend a great deal of time in sleeping, as we are in a weakened condition from wounds, or sick from the cornmeal. Others gamble their rations away on games of checkers or chess, a pasttime which has caused some men to faint from excitement. Balls have been held where half the participants wear blanket skirts and provide themselves with dance cards. This place is a great and appalling disaster, Mother. Joseph and I have determined to work for what little extra food we need to live.' (pause, shaking her head, and making a comment like "My poor sons."

" 'I am in charge of a squad which cuts and squares timbers. We are constantly under guard by old men and young boys and are unable to accomplish very little before the sun makes work impossible. Joseph has volunteered for a Sanitary Commission burial squad because the work takes him beyond the confines of the camp during most of the day. At night we sleep by turns to guard our few possessions from roving bands of prisoners who prey upon those who have managed to retain some necessity or luxury. We have seen our own boys tried by mock juries and even executed by their companions over a disputed scrap of blanket, or a few square yards of ground near the 'deadline.'

" 'Last night a prisoner started a tunnel from the little hut he occupied. The attempt was betrayed possibly by a spy, and the sergeant of the guard came and investigated. Plunging a steel ramrod into the ground in various places, he discovered the excavation and sent a corporal down to find how far the work had been completed. The corporal brought back a box by which the dirt had been removed. 'Hello,' said the sargeant, 'that is the third time I have caught that box! Take it and go to work somewhere else, boys!' Escapes here are not frequent, as most of the prisoners are too weak to dig such a long tunnel. Then, too, the pack of hounds kept outside the stockade has been successful in running down the fugitives. Another group of prisoners who were given permission to dig for water completed instead a long tunnel which came to the surface in the middle of a campfire which the guards around the stockade had built. The prisoners sprang up through the fire nevertheless, much to the alarm of the guards, who took to their heels, apparently thinking that the door of the eternal regions had opened.

" 'Time passes slowly for us, Mother. We always keep you in our thoughts, and we often talk of days when we were at home in Wendell, raising houses and barns with our neighbors. We remember Sunday dinners of roasts, and Indian puddings. We remember cold, sunny mornings when we awoke in the loft and watched our breath turn to clouds, and breakfasts of flapjacks cooked over the coals. We remember long sermons and hymns on Sundays spent in church. We remember reading by the light of pine knots. We remember those we lóve.

" 'We pray that we may be released and once again live at home again.

Your loving sons, David and Joseph' "

References used:

History of the Connecticut Valley, (Wendell historical packet)
Prisons and Hospitals: Pictorial History of the Civil War (1912)

Alvin Fiske

by Broadus Mitchell

This sketch is written from the viewpoint of one native to the South, who came to Wendell as a summer resident in 1938, the year of the first modern and most remembered hurricane.

In the earlier history of this nation the people of the South felt friendship and admiration for New England. The leaders there were fellow patriots. Great John Adams was a bit crusty, but his self-importance was offset by the romantic figures of John Hancock and Paul Revere. James Otis' piercing oratory reminded us of our own Patrick Henry. Sam Adams' gift in public relations were superior to the ardor of Christopher Gadsden, but nobody could equal the Boston propagandist for independence. New England had no one quite like Washington but General Henry Knox was a favorite comrade of the commander in chief.

Fifty years slid by and turned the South's affection for New England to suspicion and hatred. The controversy over slavery was the cause. The several New England states were differently regarded. Maine did not matter much in the southern mind, for was it not half frozen? New Hampshire and Vermont were mostly mountains, though the few people in those heights were regarded as agents of the Devil. Rhode Island rested under the benign christening of Roger Williams. Connecticut was filled with sharpers, but they were commercial rather than political.

But Massachusetts appeared to the South to be the distillation of evil. William Lloyd Garrison, prince of the abolitionists, was Boston based. The tall anti-slavery Senator Sumner was every inch outrageous. The Massachusetts people were educated, intrusive in public affairs, ready to preach morals to everybody else. The South could have borne with other New England states, but not with the righteousness of Massachusetts. This was concentrated in the vigor of Boston.

A generation after the Civil War the Southerners' distaste for New England lingered. My parents and teachers discounted such prejudice, but the atmosphere of opinion in Richmond, Virginia, the old capital of the Confederacy, was sullenly hostile.

If when I came to Wendell I needed to be purged of distrust, the people of this town reassured me. I heard nobody speak of the South with contempt, as though we were a cultural swamp. One Wendell neighbor may stand for the rest.

Alvin Fiske was the refutation of every false idea of New Englanders I had heard in Virginia and South Carolina. He was not rigid, but relaxed. His speech was not sparse and acid, but was unhurried and cordial. Selfish and grasping was supposed to be the type, but he was ever friendly and helpful to a newcomer. In an August drought that greeted our arrival, he loaned us one of his large milk cans in which to store water from a distant spring. Most of his cash living was as a dairyman, but he was also a knowledgeable woodsman, farmer, mechanic, hunter, and fisherman. He was a store of country wisdom. When nearly everyone else had ceased to live from the land he continued cultivating, haying, and hauling with horses. He stored ice, cut from a pond in winter and cooled his milk in a tank fed by gravity from a spring.

Allie Fiske was a conservationist, although no one called him that. He lived from what was extracted from Nature, but carefully husbanded those resources. He welcomed the State's suggestion that a pair of beavers be located in his little pond. Once they had built a dam, he stocked the pond with fish. He was a leader in a group called the Franklin County White Hare Association. He may have wanted the hares for Mrs. Fiske's kitchen pot, but first the there had to be enough of them.

So far from the traditional grim countenence of New England granite, Fiske was a humourous man. One instance may serve as illustration. As the great hurricane of September 21, 1938 roared past, he scurried about the place, securing and battening down anything loose. One thing escaped him, however. Above the howl of the wind, he heard something behind him, and looked over his shoulder. "I've been chased by a lot of things," he said later, "but never before by a privy."

Always working during the day, when you went to his house at a leisure hour he begged you to sit down, was ready for conversation. Though he had inherited his Wendell farm from father and grandfather, I tell you the man might have been from Georgia or Alabama, though the industry and ingenuity are not so prominent in my native parts.

He stayed on the farm for a few years after Mrs. Fiske's death, helped after a time by a comfortable Irish housekeeper, Mrs. Morrissey. But before 1960, he was gone, spending his last few years in Northfield.

An arsonist destroyed the empty house, and the new owner of the land removed all traces of the buildings and filled in the cellar-hole. After twenty years no trace remains of the fact that the place was farmed for upwards of a hundred years. What was the Fiske driveway is the community's access to the beaver pond, now a local swimming hole. Most who use it never heard of Alvin Fiske, but a few of us remember.

FINIS

This ends the series of vignettes written by the members of the Wendell Bicentennial Committee. It was the intention of the committee to reflect Wendell's history from its beginnings to its present, and to include vignettes on Cora Hudson, Louis Lupian and others. as well as vignettes that would reflect the town's recent past and present. The vignettes which have been published so far are just a beginning, and the committee members invite anyone who is interested in helping complete this project to join them.

Erv Fisher, Hal Stowell & the Vincents eye competitors Donna Barnes and Ed Chase at the Log Sawing Contest, organized by Pliny Stebbins.

Yakitoris made their debut.

Fire and Police personnel joined to offer children an unusual opportunity to ride Wendell's powerful pumper engine.

Clown Teri Nelson also maneuvered the mountain of bales, the hay tunnel, and other hurdles in the Obstacle Course, org. by Helen Boland.

Oops, Sheila McPhee caught a surprise in the Balloon Toss, org. by Shelly and Sherry Connolly.

Organized by the Wendell Fire Assoc., The Children's Money Hunt got the chips flying as youngsters searched for the glimmer of silver.

The Laundry Toss (org. by Klondike) gave Marilyn Jones and Susan McCaffrey a chance to throw off their everyday chores.

WENDELL

OLD HOME DAY COMMITTEE

Lisa Aubin
Tom Bardsley
Kathy Becker
Helen Boland
Michael MacDonald
Teri Nelson
Doug Simon
Brenda Vincent

Chairperson: Anne Diemand

The Wendell Country Store

introducing a new line of fine imported wines.

Friendly People Serving You

Morris Dancers executed traditional fertility dances on the common as part of the apres Old Home Day Picnic, held Sunday afternoon.